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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Efficacy of Acupuncture for De Quervain's Tenosynovitis



To the Editor:

I read the article by Hadianfard et al [1] with interest and might consider prescribing acupuncture rather than a corticosteroid injection for a patient with diabetes, as the authors suggest. The authors have also mentioned that lactating mothers with De Quervain's tendinitis are good candidates to receive acupuncture treatment. However, none of the gynecologists and pediatricians I have spoken to have ever voiced concern about injecting 40 mg of methylprednisolone acetate for De Quervain's tendinitis in these women.

My real issues are more general and revolve around the confounding use of thumb spica splints, the short-term follow up (6 weeks), and the unexplored costs associated with five visits for acupuncture versus a single visit for injection.

Patients in both the study groups (acupuncture and injection groups) wore thumb spica splints, but the authors did not include a third group that just wore splints without receiving any other treatment. As a result, there is no way of knowing whether it was the splint or the acupuncture that provided the relief in the acupuncture group. Should the authors devise a follow-on study, I encourage them to include a third group, which receives nothing but splinting.

Normally a corticosteroid injection for De Quervain's tendinitis provides relief for at least 6 months if it is not curative. The trial lasted only 6 weeks, and therefore, we have no way of knowing whether the effect of acupuncture lasted anywhere nearly as long as the anticipated benefit from an injection.

In the "Discussion" section, the authors state that "Acupuncture is also a relatively cost-effective therapy among other modalities." I would like to know the cost at the authors' institution for one injection versus five acupuncture treatments. In this regard, we also need to consider intangible costs to the patient, such as lost productivity and travel expenses required to make the four additional visits for acupuncture treatments.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Reference

- [1] Hadianfard M, Ashraf A, Fakheri M, Nasiri A. Efficacy of acupuncture versus local methylprednisolone acetate injection in De Quervain's tenosynovitis: a randomized controlled trial. *J Acupunct Meridian Stud* 2014;7:115–21.

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